

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In a computing system that is in communication with one or more applications that are configured to utilize contact information, a method for providing a contact management system for managing contacts and their corresponding contact information for use by the one or more applications, the method comprising:

creating one or more contacts having contact information that can be utilized by the one or more applications, such that the one or more applications can utilize the contact information;

storing the contacts in a contact store that is accessible to the computing system;

upon receiving a request from at least one of the applications for access to a contact and corresponding contact information, providing the at least one of the applications access to the contact and corresponding contact information through one or more interfaces;

enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact.

2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more interfaces prevent the at least one of the applications from having direct access to the contacts and corresponding contact information in the contact store.

3. A method as recited in claim 2, wherein the interfaces further provide a security mechanism for preventing the at least one of the applications from accessing contacts and corresponding contact information that a corresponding user of the computing system has not authorized.

4. A method as recited in claim 3, wherein the corresponding user is a logged on user of the computing system.

5. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to update the contact information of the contact within the contact store.

6. A method as recited in claim 5, wherein the contact information is updated by syncing the contact information in the contact store with contact information provided by the at least one of the applications.

7. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes updating contact information stored by the at least one of the applications in an application store with the corresponding contact information from the contact store.

8. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the contact to be sent to another store of another computing system.

9. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the heterogeneous application to modifying the contact.

10. A method as recited in claim 9, wherein modifying the contact includes modifying an attribute associated with the contact.

11. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to create an association between the contact and at least one other contact.

12. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to initiate a communication by using the contact information associated with the contact.

13. A method as recited in claim 12, wherein the communication includes at least one of an e-mail, a telephony session, an RTC session, an instant message, a facsimile, a telephone message and a pager notification.

14. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein creating the contact includes merging contact information corresponding to a single person and that is obtained from a plurality of sources into a single contact.

15. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the contact comprises a data structure having a plurality of fields that contain different contact information, and wherein the one or more applications are configured to utilize contact information from different fields of the contact data structure.

16. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one of the applications is hosted by the computing system.

17. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein creating the contact includes enabling the user to set constraints that control how the contact can at least one of be accessed and utilized by applications.

18. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more interfaces includes an interface for enabling a user to select portions of the contact information that will be made accessible to the at least one of the applications.

19. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more interfaces includes an interface for enabling a user to select the contact from a plurality of available contacts.

20. A computer program product for use in a computing system that is in communication with one or more heterogeneous applications that are configured to utilize contact information differently, the computer program product comprising one or more computer-readable media having computer-executable instructions for implementing a method for providing a contact management system for managing contacts and their corresponding contact information for use by the one or more applications, the method comprising:

creating one or more contacts having contact information that can be utilized by the one or more applications, such that the one or more applications can utilize the contact information;

storing the contacts in a contact store that is accessible to the computing system;

upon receiving a request from at least one of the applications for access to a contact and corresponding contact information, providing the at least one of the applications access to the contact and corresponding contact information through one or more interfaces;

enabling the at least one of the heterogeneous applications to utilize the contact.

21. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein the one or more interfaces prevent the at least one of the applications from having direct access to the contacts and corresponding contact information in the contact store.

22. A computer program product as recited in claim 21, wherein the interfaces further provide a security mechanism for preventing the at least one of the applications from accessing contacts and corresponding contact information that a corresponding user of the computing system has not authorized.

23. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to update the contact information of the contact within the contact store.

24. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes updating contact information stored by the at least one of the applications in an application store with the corresponding contact information from the contact store.

25. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the contact to be sent to another store of another computing system.

26. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to modifying the contact.

27. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to create an association between the contact and at least one other contact.

28. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein enabling the at least one of the applications to utilize the contact includes enabling the at least one of the applications to initiate a communication by using the contact information associated with the contact.

29. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein creating the contact includes merging contact information corresponding to a single person and that is obtained from a plurality of sources into a single contact.

30. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein the contact comprises a data structure having a plurality of fields that contain different contact information, and wherein the one or more applications are configured to utilize contact information from different fields of the contact data structure.

31. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein the at least one of the applications is hosted by the computing system.

32. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein creating the contact includes enabling the user to set constraints that control how the contact can at least one of be accessed and utilized by applications.

33. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein the one or more interfaces includes an interface for enabling a user to select portions of the contact information that will be made accessible to the one or more applications.

34. In a computing system that includes a contact store storing at least one contact, the contact comprising contact information that can be utilized differently by heterogeneous applications that are in communication with the computing system, the heterogeneous applications having application contact directories that are maintained independently of the contact store and that defines the at least one contact, a method for providing a contact management system for managing contacts and their corresponding contact information for use by the heterogeneous applications, the method comprising:

creating one or more contacts having contact information that can be utilized differently by at least two heterogeneous applications;

storing the contacts in a contact store that is accessible to the computing system;

modifying contact information for at least one of the contacts in the contact store;

upon modifying the contact information, automatically updating corresponding contact information in at least one application contact directory of at least one of the heterogeneous applications to correspond with the modified contact information in the contact store, and such that the at least one application is able to access the updated contact information without having to request the updated contact information from the contact store.

35. A method as recited in claim 34, wherein modifying the contact information includes modifying content of the contact information.

36. A method as recited in claim 35, wherein modifying the contact information is performed by a local application hosted by the computing system.

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37. A computer program product for use in a computing system that includes a contact store storing at least one contact, the contact comprising contact information that can be utilized differently by heterogeneous applications that are in communication with the computing system, the heterogeneous applications having application contact directories that are maintained independently of the contact store and that defines the at least one contact, the computer program product comprising one or more computer-readable media having computer-executable instructions for implementing a method for providing a contact management system for managing contacts and their corresponding contact information for use by the heterogeneous applications, the method comprising:

creating one or more contacts having contact information that can be utilized differently by at least two heterogeneous applications;

storing the contacts in a contact store that is accessible to the computing system;

modifying contact information for at least one of the contacts in the contact store;

upon modifying the contact information, automatically updating corresponding contact information in at least one application contact directory of at least one of the heterogeneous applications to correspond with the modified contact information in the contact store, and such that the at least one application is able to access the updated contact information without having to request the updated contact information from the contact store.

38. A computer program product as recited in claim 37, wherein modifying the contact information includes modifying content of the contact information.

39. A computer program product as recited in claim 37, wherein modifying the contact information is performed by a local application hosted by the computing system.

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40. In a computing system that is in communication with at least two heterogeneous applications that are configured to utilize contact information differently, a method for providing a contact management system for managing contacts and their corresponding contact information for use by the at least two heterogeneous applications, the method comprising:

creating one or more contacts having contact information that can be utilized differently by at least two heterogeneous applications, such that the at least two heterogeneous applications can at least one of utilize different portions of the contact information and utilize the same portions of contact information in different ways;

storing the contacts in a contact store that is accessible to the computing system;

upon receiving a request from at least one of the heterogeneous applications for access to a contact and corresponding contact information, providing the at least one of the heterogeneous applications access to the contact and corresponding contact information through one or more interfaces;

enabling the at least one of the heterogeneous applications to utilize the contact.